

Russia Warns New U.S. Missile Strategy Will Unleash Arms Race in Space

By [Reuters](#)

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Foreign Ministry

Russia said on Friday the new U.S. missile defense strategy would unleash a dangerous arms race in space and amounts to a relaunch of the Cold War-era "Star Wars" program.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday unveiled a plan that envisages developing space-based sensors to detect incoming enemy missiles and exploring space-based weapons to shoot down missiles before they can threaten U.S. soil.

A statement issued by the Russian Foreign Ministry condemned the strategy as irresponsible and an act of confrontation, but made no mention of Moscow reciprocating with new plans to develop its own nuclear capability.

Instead, the ministry called on Washington to think again, backtrack from its plans and engage in talks with Moscow to find agreement on how to manage the world's nuclear missile

arsenal.

"The strategy, de facto, gives the green light to the prospect of basing missile strike capabilities in space," the statement said.

"The implementation of these ideas will inevitably lead to the start of an arms race in space, which will have the most negative consequences for international security and stability," it said.

"We would like to call on the U.S. administration to think again and walk away from this irresponsible attempt to re-launch, on a new and more high-tech basis, the still-remembered Reagan-era 'Star Wars' program."

A renewed nuclear arms race would be a huge financial burden for Russia, whose economy is making a faltering recovery after years of low oil prices, a recession and Western trade sanctions.

President Vladimir Putin's approval rating, while still high, has fallen from its peak in 2014, in part because of unhappiness about living standards and a drop in household incomes.

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The revamped U.S. missile strategy cited concerns about the burgeoning capabilities of Iran, Russia, China and North Korea and said this required a review of U.S. capability.

It marked a departure from the approach taken by Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama, to tamp down concerns among other major nuclear powers about expanding U.S. missile defences.

Even before the new U.S. strategy was unveiled, Moscow and Washington were at loggerheads over missile defence.

The Trump administration has said it plans to withdraw from the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces treaty, on the grounds Moscow is flouting it. Russia though says it is in compliance, and that Washington is in fact in violation.

In its statement about the new U.S. strategy, the Foreign Ministry said: "It is openly confrontational in character, and once again demonstrates that Washington is trying to secure for itself unrivalled military supremacy in the world."

It said Russia had made repeated offers to Washington to negotiate about nuclear arms control, but that these offers had been ignored or rebuffed.

"We call on the U.S. administration to display political will and, once and for all, engage in a joint search for ways to resolve the problems that have built up in the strategic field, before it's too late," the statement said.

Russia has itself been accused of flirting with a new nuclear arms race, an allegation it rejects.

In March last year, Putin announced that work was underway on an array of new Russian weapons which he said could hit almost any point in the world and evade U.S. missile defences.

The new weapons included a hypersonic, nuclear-capable missile called Avangard. Putin oversaw what the Kremlin said was a pre-deployment test of the new missile in December last year, and afterwards he declared it a complete success.

Defending his stance, Putin said he was not trying to trigger a new arms race but rather to stop that from happening. By developing weapons capable of evading U.S. defenses, Putin said, he was showing U.S. officials it was futile for them to beef up their own nuclear missile capability.

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